

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on the Judiciary
Washington, DC 20515-6216
One Hundred Ninth Congress

February 10, 2005

W. Ralph Basham, Director
United States Secret Service
950 H Street, NW
Washington, DC 20223

Dear Director Basham:

We write to inquire about the process you employ to clear individuals for attendance at events within a close proximity of the President. We have recently become aware that a Republican activist, with a potential criminal past, gained access to the White House press briefing room and Presidential press conferences and was allowed to work under an assumed name. This appears to contradict the strict standards you have set for protecting the President in the past and have applied to others seeking access to the White House or the President.

It has recently been revealed that James D. Guckert has been repeatedly cleared by your office to attend White House press briefings over the last several years. He was, however, allowed to operate under an assumed name, which we understand to be contrary to your usual policies. That he may be engaged in illegal activity only heightens our concern.

We are concerned that such an individual was allowed within a few feet of the President when the public is routinely disallowed any possible contact with either the President or the White House. We understand that your security policies are developed in conjunction with the White House and want to ascertain your respective roles in this decision as it appears to deviate significantly from heightened security measures you have employed recently.

While we appreciate the extremely difficult task you are assigned to, we are concerned about these discrepancies. For this reason, we ask the following questions:

1. What standards do you impose on those who are granted access to the President and the White House Briefing Room? Do you routinely allow guests to use false names?
2. Were those standards applied to Mr. Guckert? If not, why, and at whose request?

Director W. Ralph Basham

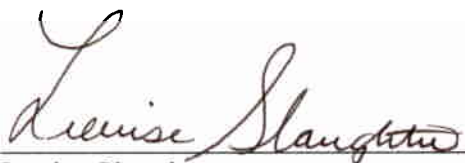
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3. This afternoon, the White House Press Secretary denied any responsibility for determining who is granted clearance into the White House Briefing Room. What individual or agency is responsible for requesting that the Secret Service conduct a security clearance for individuals or members of the media who wish to enter the White House Briefing Room?
4. What are the security qualifications for granting "permanent" White House press corps credentials and how do they differ from those of a simple day pass?
5. When someone is cleared for a daily pass, are they required to be cleared each time they return on subsequent visits to the White House Briefing Room, as in the case of Mr. Guckert, who returned frequently for up to two years?
6. How many daily passes are issued for White House briefings and Presidential press conferences at one time? Is there a limit in place for security or other reasons?
7. Who has the authority, if at all, to exempt an individual or member of the media from security clearance by the Secret Service in order to gain access to the White House Briefing Room?
8. How many times and on what days was Mr. Guckert cleared by the Secret Service into the White House, and at whose request?

Thank you in advance your prompt attention and response to this matter.

Sincerely,



Louise Slaughter
Ranking Member
Committee on Rules



John Conyers, Jr.
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary